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Feds' money crisis delays AZ road projects

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Arizona is putting the brakes on some federally funded highway projects because the federal highway trust fund is running on empty.

``We can't risk starting projects that depend on federal funding as a source for paying the bills," said Doug Nintzel of the Arizona Department of Transportation. ``So until we see some progress, our stance is that no new projects involving federal funding will move forward here on the ADOT system."

Last Friday's announcement by Transportation Secretary Mary Peters that the federal highway trust fund will run out of money this month came as no surprise, Nintzel said.

``Washington knew this was coming, but they still haven't solved it. We can't move forward on a system based on IOU's, so we're taking the stance that some projects will be on hold unless a solution is taken care of."

While Congress is considering an \$8 billion one-year fix, Nintzel said a long-term solution is needed.

The projects on hold in Arizona include ``a big project up near the Hoover Dam, widening U.S. 93. And closer to the Phoenix area, a widening project on State Route 85, north of Gila Bend."

The federal government blames the shortfall on rising gas prices which are causing people to drive less. The highway trust fund comes from gas taxes.